

Meditations: Friday of the Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the ninth week of Ordinary Time.

- Jesus reveals his identity to us
- Recognising Jesus' kingship
- God's greatness and closeness

IN SOME scenes of the Gospel, Jesus seems to want to hide his identity. He silences the demons when they say his name (cf. *Mk* 3:12), He asks the people He heals not to tell anyone

about the miracle (cf. *Mk* 1:44), and some of his teachings, at least at first, are addressed only to his apostles and not to the crowd (cf. *Mt* 16:20). Jesus knows how men project the most varied aspirations and hopes onto the Messiah: we all long for some kind of liberation, and it is natural to seek a saviour.

Yet, at other times, Jesus tries to make his true identity clear to the people gathered in the Temple. He tries to correct their limited expectations of the Messiah. Some scribes, following Jewish tradition, expected a dignified person of good lineage, from the house of David. This saviour would have to be an imposing character because he was meant to restore the house of Israel. Jesus tries to show them something greater. The titles "Messiah," "Lord," and "Son of David" are incomplete without another title expressing the very heart of his identity: He is the

Son of God. Thus, quoting one of the psalms, He asks rhetorically: *David himself calls him Lord, in what way can he be his son?* (Mk 12:37).

Jesus is the Father's beloved Son; His identity is founded on this relationship. We open an intimate conversation with God whenever we pray, and the first step is realising who we are talking to. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit want to enter into loving dialogue with us. It is possible for us to get used to this divine closeness, become accustomed to God's presence, or make our relationship with Him so formal that we enclose God in a title worthy of honour and respect, but not very filial. In this time of prayer, we can ask Him to maintain our sense of awe and help us to live in the closeness of Jesus with his Father God.

RECOGNISING JESUS Christ as the Son of God enables us to understand that He is our Lord and our lives are at the service of his kingship. And his kingship is built on love; we have no reason to doubt his authority or motivations. God's power fills our hearts with peace and leads us to thank Him for everything in our lives, even the events we don't understand. On one occasion, in the depths of his soul, St. Josemaria heard, "*Si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos?*" If God is with us, "neither the secularized and even aggressive external environment, nor the lack of material means or of health, nor the precarious employment situations in many places, nor family complications or those outside the home—nothing should be able to daunt us!"^[1] That is the confidence that comes from dwelling in the home of a God who is Father and who loves his children madly.

Contemplating Jesus as King and Lord is also demanding. We need it to be this way, because the challenge of turning our lives, which are marked by original sin, toward God the Father is difficult. Yet God offers all his power to us. When we allow Him to transform us, Christ acts in our hearts. He helps us understand that it is good for us to make Him Lord of our lives; He establishes an intimate relationship with us and shows his kingship in the concrete, practical details of our daily lives.

"Recognizing him as King means accepting him as the One who shows us the way, in whom we trust and whom we follow. It means accepting his Word day after day as a valid criterion for our life. It means seeing in him the authority to which we submit."^[2] —

The Church's tradition sometimes describes prayer as a form of combat. Accepting Jesus' lordship

means purifying the intentions that guide our lives, orienting everything toward him one step at a time, with a filial attitude. The process of inner purification is at once God's work and our free struggle. We can always ask Him where in our lives He is not yet Lord. What inner attitudes or dispositions prevent Jesus from manifesting the Father's love in my life? That is our mission, as St. Josemaria assured us: "The King himself, Jesus, has called you expressly by your name. He asks you to fight in God's battles, and to put at his service the noblest powers of your soul: your heart, your will, your understanding, all your being."^[3] —

THOUGH JESUS' tone is serious when He speaks about his lordship, the Gospel ends by highlighting people's joy in his presence: *And the great*

majority of the people heard this with delight (Mk 12:37). Even when Jesus corrects the scribes, nothing in his voice or expression indicates irritation. It is easy to enjoy his words and, drawn by their beauty, to open ourselves to their truth. When we accept Jesus as God's beloved Son and our Lord, we find a deeper joy than the goods of this world can provide. Little by little, we realise that we cannot live without prayer, because it is the time to simply enjoy the presence of the One who gives full meaning to our existence.

Thus our life of prayer is nourished by the double reality that makes it fruitful. On the one hand, we are in awe of Jesus, who is truly God and yet ready to converse with us. It is natural to see ourselves as weak and perceive the gulf that separates us from Him. Like Elizabeth before her cousin Mary, we might ask, *How can it be that the mother of my Lord*

comes to me? (Lk 1:43) One the other hand, in every time of prayer we are surprised by another great truth of faith: God is close to us. Being with Jesus, sharing our hopes and difficulties with Him, is the source of our peace. We understand St. Josemaria's invitation to "make the effort to do everything, even the smallest things, to please Jesus [...] from now on, and always."^[4] —

Our Lady's contemplative life was also sustained by God's greatness and her closeness to Him. We see her surprise at the Annunciation, because she did not understand why God took notice of her. She quickly surrenders to the God who wants to become a child, however, and enjoys his company for all eternity. "Let us learn from our Mother, the Virgin Mary. She followed her Son with the closeness of her heart. She was of one soul with Him. And, together with him, even though not

understanding everything, she abandoned herself completely to the will of God the Father."^[5]

[1] Bishop Javier Echevarría, Pastoral letter, 1-X-2016.

[2] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 1-IV-2007.

[3] St. Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 962.

[4] St. Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 1041.

[5] Pope Francis, Angelus, 2-IV-2023.
